

PAPAL U.K. TRIP TOUCHES NERVE; RESPONSES VARY WILDLY

The consensus was that Pope Benedict XVI scored mightily in impressing the British. Judging from the size of the crowds that turned out to greet him, September 16-19, as well as the intensity of the response, it was clear that he won over not only Catholics, but even many of his former critics. The protesters were there, but they did not win the day. The Holy Father did.

At the conclusion of the trip, Prime Minister David Cameron praised the pope for the “searching questions” he posed. Media coverage proved to be a surprise as the BBC, a long-time hyper critic of the Catholic Church, showed a different side. “A pope who had previously been regarded as someone rather cold, professional, aloof and authoritarian,” wrote David Willey, “had suddenly been perceived as a rather kindly and gentle grandfather figure.” Not only that, but the pope’s speech at Westminster was dubbed a “triumph,” moving one British notable to say his performance was “sheer magic.”

Given the general euphoria over the pope’s visit, it made papal haters like Richard Dawkins look foolish by comparison; the famous atheist wanted the pope arrested for “crimes against humanity.” Supporting him in denouncing the Holy Father were such groups as “Protest the Pope,” Atheism UK and the National Secular Society. The infamous Catholic basher, Rev. Ian Paisley, also showed up to condemn the pope. To read some of their delirious hate speech, see pp. 4-5.

The Catholic League challenged the atheists to issue an apology for the crimes of Hitler, Stalin and Mao. We did this following remarks by the pope who cited Hitler as an example of “atheist extremism” in the 20th century. We thought it only fair that since these atheists demand that the pope apologize

for the misconduct of some priests, they should apologize for the over 150 million innocent persons murdered in the name of atheism.

In the U.S., media coverage was mixed. Of the three major evening news programs, ABC was mostly fair; NBC was dismissive; and CBS was patently unfair. CNN and the *New York Times* were the most unbalanced: CNN could not stop reporting on excommunicated women who pretend they're priests, and the *Times* could not concentrate on anything but the abuse issue. In other words, they reacted like ideologues, not journalists.

The pope broke some new ground, and he clearly touched a nerve. Media coverage was varied, but in general it was not bad. In a day and age of Catholic bashing, we're satisfied.

RALLY SUCCEEDS

The Mother Teresa rally proved to be a success on many fronts. Held on August 26, to mark her centenary, the rally drew over 3,000 persons. We know this because the police estimated that the area cordoned off for the participants holds 6,500, and we filled more than half the area. And this doesn't count the large numbers who watched from the sidewalks on both sides of 34th Street, between 5th Ave. and Broadway.

Seventeen notables spoke at the rally (see pp. 10-12). There were politicians from both the Republican and Democrat Parties; there were celebrities, religious figures and New York icons; there were Albanians, African Americans, Indians, Irish, Italians, Jews, Latinos and others; there were Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and Hindus. The diversity of the speakers proved our point: Mother Teresa

transcended all demographic boundaries.

The TV coverage of the rally was spectacular: we led the evening news on practically every New York channel, as well as the next morning's news. The newspaper coverage was mixed. The worst coverage was given by *Newsday*, which not only erred wildly in reporting the size of the crowd, it refused to print a letter by Jeff Field challenging its estimate.

Bill Donohue noted that it was a sign of Divine Providence that Anthony Malkin, the owner of the Empire State Building, was himself rejected when the New York City Council denied his request to prohibit the building of a new skyscraper in the vicinity of his trophy building. He was rejected the day before the rally.

GROUND ZERO MOSQUE IS MORALLY WRONG

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK
William Donohue

As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, and as a strong advocate of religious liberty, I am instinctively pulled towards support for building a mosque near Ground Zero. But I am also a veteran of the United States Air Force, as well as a first-hand witness to the destruction and collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It is the latter credentials that pull me away from supporting the mosque. After much reflection, I have resolved the tension between these two competing sets of identity markers: I am opposed to building the mosque at this site.

If the choice were between supporting the right of the government to forbid the construction of a mosque near Ground Zero, and allowing it to be built, I would not hesitate to side with those who want to build it. But that is not the operative choice. Of course, the government has no right to summarily ban the construction of any house of worship. However, what is at work in this case is the *moral* right of Muslims to choose this particular site to build a mosque.

Let's say that instead of radical Muslims on 9/11, the terrorists were members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). As someone who is both an American and an Irish citizen, I would not support the construction of an Irish center near Ground Zero. Why? Because it would send the wrong message. What makes the case for a Ground Zero Mosque even more problematic is that the murder took place in the name of Islam.

The man behind the mosque, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, says he wants the structure to be built so he can bring people together. Having palpably failed at this goal already, and having snubbed an offer by New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan to mediate a settlement, one wonders why he persists: his project has done more to divide people than any sinister anti-Muslim plot could ever do. Why doesn't he take a page out of the Catholic playbook and do what the nuns did when asked by the pope to remove the large Cross they erected near the Auschwitz concentration camp? Just move it somewhere else. That's what people do when they have no agenda.

Interestingly, Imam Rauf's name for the building is Cordoba House, named after the Cordoba Mosque that was erected in Cordoba, Spain following Muslim conquest in 784. That's part of their history: after they take over, they build mosques in sites previously occupied by churches and synagogues. It's kind of a Muslim trophy.

More important is Imam Rauf's refusal to admit that Islam is in dire need of reform. He categorically denies this to be

true. Which can only mean that he finds it acceptable, under Sharia law, to legally murder a Muslim who converts. Or that he has no real problem with the stoning to death of an adulterous Muslim woman. That's the law in Muslim-run nations, and no amount of spin saying that this is not exactly what the Koran condones can change this reality.

Similarly, why does Rauf not unequivocally condemn Hamas? Hamas is not a sports club, nor is it a fraternity: it is a terrorist organization that takes pride in the intentional killing of innocent Christians and Jews. And for reasons he will not explain, Rauf hesitates to call them what they are.

Some of the supporters of the Ground Zero Mosque say that what Muslims are experiencing today is reminiscent of what Catholics went through in the nineteenth century. But this is nonsense. Anti-Catholicism at that time was visited on Catholics merely because they were Catholic: Catholic children were beaten in the schools for not reading the Protestant Bible, and their parents routinely discriminated against in the workplace. By contrast, Muslims today enjoy a wide array of rights.

It cannot be overlooked that many of the advocates of building the Ground Zero Mosque have a very curious record of defending religious liberty. For example, neither President Barack Obama, nor New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, has a great record defending Catholic rights. Consider that when Obama went to Georgetown last year, his advance team ordered that a drape be placed over IHS, Latin for Jesus. Similarly, when practically everyone took the side of the Catholic League in the Mother Teresa controversy, Bloomberg could not bring himself to criticize Anthony Malkin for not lighting the upper floors of the Empire State Building in her honor.

We could not help but notice that many of those same newspapers that have never been known to be sympathetic to Catholic causes were strongly on the side of Muslims. And some

evinced a smugness that was downright sickening. In this regard, no paper topped the *New York Times*.

With great remorse, the *Times* noted that most New Yorkers do not want the Ground Zero Mosque. "New Yorkers, like other Americans," it said, "have a way to go." In other words, even the urbane men and women of Gotham are acting like those hicks in fly-over country. The benchmark of enlightenment, of course, is the *New York Times*. You know you've made it when you catch up to them. Guess I have a way to go.

POPE'S CRITICS GO BALLISTIC

Since Pope Benedict XVI announced that he would visit the United Kingdom in September, his critics have gone ballistic. The following is a sample of some of the commentary leading up to his visit. All comments appear in their original form:

The Independent, 4/2/2010: "The Pope, to put it baldly, is now too embattled and too damaged by the worldwide revelations of abuse and cover-up to be able to come to this country without controversy, protests and distaste."

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, New Scotsman, 6/10/2010: "A statement said they find it 'offensive that this visit results from an invitation to the Pope as Head of State, giving him that recognition and pretended legitimacy which he claims in opposition to the principles of the Reformation.'"

"Describing the Papacy as 'deceitful and unrighteous,' the Free Presbyterians highlighted recent global exposure of child abuse by Roman Catholic clergy, and suggest the Pope has connived in a cover-up."

Cristina Odone, *Sunday Telegraph*, 9/5/2010: "These are different times. Catholics have watched in horror as, almost daily and almost in every country, broken men and women have come forth to tell of their ordeal at the hands of abusive priests." (Our italic.)

Sinead O'Connor, *The Guardian*, 9/5/2010: "'Catholic' has become a word associated with negativity, with abuse, with violence, but the essence of Catholicism is beautiful. The fact is, tragically, it's been brought into disrepute by the people running it."

"Benedict is in no position to call himself Christ's representative. The pope should stand down, the Vatican should stand down, not only because of the cover-up, they're incredibly arrogant, they're anti-Christian. They don't have the remotest relationship with God."

Peter Tatchell, *Telegraph*, 9/8/2010: "Benedict XVI put the interests and image of the church before the welfare of children and young people. He is unfit to remain as Pope. He should resign."

Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, *The Irish Post*, 9/8/2010: "This anti-Catholicism of which Adamus complains is shared by most British Catholics, sickened by their church hierarchy's dogma driven policies on contraception, homosexuality and even abortion. That is why Mass attendance here has halved in just 20 years and why only a quarter of Catholics agree with the official line on abortion—and fewer still on homosexuality and contraception."

Bernard Wynne, a spokesman for Catholic Voices for Reform, *Telegraph*, 9/8/2010: "The church, I think, is deeply misogynist and we have to change that."

Julie Burchill, *Independent*, 9/8/2010: "How broad-minded this country is, when we consider that the British taxpayer will

shortly be shelling out millions of pounds to protect a former member of the Hitler Youth who believes Anglicans will burn in Hell when the Pope visits this country next week—Just after we commemorate the beginning of the Nazi Blitz on this country! Tolerant or WHAT!”

“The behaviour of the Church during the Second World War, and to the Jews generally, was vile—and REALLY makes me wonder if it wouldn’t have been possible to pick a Pope who HADN’T been in the Hitler Youth? Closer to home, let alone legions of child-raping holy men, only last week a leading light in the Catholic Church defended its role in moving a priest believed to be involved in three bombings which killed nine people, including Catholics, in the village of Claudy, Co Londonderry, in 1972. The youngest was an eight-year-old girl: ‘suffer little children,’ indeed.”

Peter Tatchell, CNN.com, 9/16/2010: “We do not believe that the pope should be honored with a state visit, given his role in the cover up of child sex abuse by Catholic clergy. Even today, he is refusing to hand the Vatican’s secret sex abuse files to the police in countries worldwide. He is protecting the abusers. This makes him complicit with sex crimes against children. Such a person does not deserve the honor of a state visit.”

“Pius XII was no saint. The fact that Pope Benedict wants to makes him a saint shows how far he has strayed from the moral and ethical values of most Catholics and most of humanity.”

Reverend Ian Paisley, 9/16/2010: “We are here for a very solemn and serious reason today, the whole day is nonsense.... I have just seen the statement made today which says that if you pay £25 to be at the Mass in Scotland your sins will be forgiven. No man can forgive sins but Christ himself, it is misleading nonsense.”

Andrew Copson, British Humanist Association Chief Executive

website: "The Protest the Pope campaign is calling on the British government to disassociate itself from the Pope's intolerant teachings on issues such as women's rights, gay equality and the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV. On these and many other issues, Benedict is out of step with the majority of British people, including most Catholics."

"The Pope's attitude to lesbian and gay people is just one of the many stances that the Vatican State holds which are damaging to human dignity and human rights."

Pepper Harow, Protest the Pope: "We really think that we got the message across that the Pope is not welcome on a State visit. His outspoken state policies on homosexuality, condoms, education and abortion, as well as the child abuse scandal, continue to affect the rights of millions of individuals across the world and mean that he should not be given the honour of a State visit."

Atheism UK website: "This is yet another example of hypocrisy of the church. What we have here is an institution that claims moral superiority and preaches respect for life. That it is able to abandon its own teachings when it suits them is deplorable and dishonest. It seems the church does not care what crimes it commits, just so long as they do not get caught. It's clear that the Catholic Church places the survival of the Institution above the welfare of ordinary men, women and children."

"We do not wish to see a man who calls himself 'God's Vicar on Earth' and is thereby purely deluded, coming to this country and spreading his poisonous and demonstrable false doctrine to the people of this country, not to mention that he is implicated in the cover up of child rape and that he is making British taxpayers pay for the privilege in these financially troubled times."

Richard Dawkins, *New Humanist Magazine*: "Go home to your

tinpot Mussolini-concocted principality, and don't come back."

Humanist Society of Scotland: "There are particular grounds in Northern Ireland for opposition to the visit. First of all, there is strong evidence that Pope Benedict was complicit in the cover-up of the abuse of children throughout the island by continuing to insist that accusations of paedophilia within the priesthood should be treated by the Church's own exclusive jurisdiction. Secondly, the Pope's insistence that the Catholic Church maintains its own schools is prolonging segregated education, which is detrimental to the future of peace."

Geoffrey Robertson, Human Rights Lawyer: "For 30 years, as Cardinal Ratzinger, from 1981 on, he was in charge of what to do about paedophile priests and he declined on the whole to even defrock them. It's been many centuries since a Pope has resigned but it would be a very dignified and honourable action... We've got to see that tens of thousands of children who have been raped by priests...as a human rights atrocity. It's gone on throughout the world. Wherever the church is, there have been abusers."

National Secular Society Website: "You can show your disapproval of Ratzinger by protesting against the legal bans that the Vatican has fought for on abortion and stem cell research. And also for his obdurate, and breathtakingly irresponsible, opposition to contraception. It fuels a population growth that is unsustainable. Women in poverty-stricken circumstances in countries with dwindling resources are doomed to have large families that they cannot support and who frequently starve. And his using all means, even dishonest ones, to prevent condom use causing untold numbers to die unnecessarily of AIDS because the only known barrier against the disease, condoms, is denied to them."

"Gay people from around the country will also be coming to put two fingers up to Benedict's constant defamation and insults."

He calls gay relationships—however loving and committed they may be—‘intrinsically disordered’ and ‘morally evil’. He even says that sympathising with gay people who are being persecuted is a sin. Make no mistake, the Vatican has declared war on gay people and this is the time to start the fightback.”

“Ratzinger is, without doubt, guilty of enabling this culture of secrecy and betrayal to continue throughout the thirty years he has been at the top of the Vatican hierarchy both as a Cardinal and as Pope. He has done little to correct it because he still considers that the reputation of the church is more important than the future lives of children who are mercilessly abused, indeed raped, by his priests.”

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society: “I cannot believe that we are lauding the head of an organisation that not only insults and denigrates homosexuals, tries to restrict the rights of women by banning contraception and abortion, but deliberately lies about the effectiveness of condoms in the fight against AIDS. This invitation is a rebuke to all those Britons who are incensed by the horrific revelations that are emerging daily about the Vatican’s activities. The Government should be sharply criticising rather than welcoming this man.”

“We are not going to try to arrest the pope, but we do want him to know that his teachings are profoundly inhumane and damaging to so many people.”

“Protest the Pope started as a protest about the cost of this visit, but others have joined that have different issues with Ratzinger – women who want to take their rightful place in the churches life, priests who want to see an end to the celibacy rules, gay people who are— when they are indentified—driven from the seminaries and the priesthood.”

BURNING KORAN IS DEADLY WRONG

Leading up to September 11, the media was buzzing about a Florida pastor that was planning on burning a copy of the Koran on the ninth anniversary of the terrorist attacks. When we heard what his plans were, we fully condemned them.

Minister Terry Jones wanted to show his anger at radical Muslims by burning a copy of the Koran but he was wrong morally, and he was literally endangering innocent lives.

The Koran is embraced by Muslims who are law-abiding men and women, as well as by terrorists. Jones knew this to be true, but somehow in his twisted understanding of Christianity, he thought he had the right to insult and smear all Muslims.

Furthermore, he was endangering innocent lives—including Americans—as Gen. David Petraeus warned. Jones' threat alone led Muslims to take to the streets in Afghanistan and Indonesia.

While it would be wrong to sustain the “heckler’s veto” by giving in to those who seek to veto free speech by heckling, in this instance the “heckler’s veto” was moot: no one was in jeopardy of losing his free speech rights. What was being requested was a plea not to inflame passions needlessly by assaulting the sensibilities of Muslims worldwide.

In 1998, Bill Donohue criticized gay radicals who burned a copy of the Bible at Syracuse University to protest an appearance by Pat Buchanan. In Jones, we had an extremist on the right seeking to stoke the flames of bigotry against Muslims. It, too, had to be criticized.

Minister Jones was acting in a disgraceful manner by engaging

inagitprop and needed to be unequivocally condemned.

Thankfully, in the end he seemed to come to his senses and decided to call off the Koran burning. Hopefully he realized that there are plenty of legitimate ways to protest the wrongdoing that took place on September 11, 2001. But burning the Koran is certainly not one of them.

SPINMEISTERS TOY WITH RELIGION

On September 8, there were several attempts to spin the truth about religion in various news reports:

- “The Holocaust is nothing but a superstition,” opined another one of the Grand Ayatollahs from Iran, proving once again that education is no cure for evil.
- The Grand Narcissist, Stephen Hawking, strained to tell us in his new book that he has figured out a complicated theory—which “is not a theory in the usual sense”—that conveniently confirmed his longstanding atheism.
- It was also nice to know that in the land of Kings and Queens, critics of the papal trip to the U.K. were accusing the pope of governing an institutional church that is “too monarchical.”
- Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf wrote an article wondering what the fuss was all about regarding the building of a mosque near Ground Zero, but never mentioned the word “mosque.” Instead, he said that there would be “separate prayer spaces for Muslims, Christians, Jews and men and women of other faiths.”

We can't wait to see what the Catholic "prayer space" will look like. And if someone decides to switch religions while visiting this DisneyWorld of Prayer, it will be curious to see what happens to that poor soul.

- The Hartford City Council would not dare open its sessions with a "Hail Mary" recited by a priest—that would be grounds for arrest—but they decided to show their empathy with those who want a mosque near Ground Zero by inviting local imams to offer Islamic invocations.

The spinmeisters never fail to impress, so thoroughly have they mastered the art of lying. But to use religion as their toy is all the more disturbing.

PHONY ATHEISTS

Every time a Christian group seeks a public expression of religion, it is challenged by atheist organizations like American Atheists and the Freedom from Religion Foundation. Yet when it came to the Hartford City Council inviting an imam to open their meeting with a prayer, American Atheists said nothing (even though we contacted them to see what they would say) and the Freedom from Religion Foundation merely asked the City Council not to allow any prayers, taking a swipe at *Christians*!

It would be hard to top these phonies—their real agenda is to go after Christians, not religion, per se. No wonder the Freedom from Religion Foundation never got exercised over the Ground Zero Mosque: Muslim rights are one thing, rights for Catholics are another story.

Unlike these atheist groups, the Catholic League remains

principled. We are not happy about the Ground Zero Mosque, but we strongly denounced the plot to burn the Koran. We had Muslims speak at our rally, yet we oppose Islamist ideology. That's fair.

LOUIS C.K. CAN'T GIVE IT UP

At the end of August, repeat Catholic offender Louis C.K. bashed the Catholic Church on an episode of his FX show "Louie."

When we got word that Louis C.K. was at it again, we had to watch the show. It was painful. But was it anti-Catholic? Sure. That was the point of it. After all, the purpose of the episode was to convince elementary school kids that all the talk about Jesus dying on the Cross for our sins is pure bunk.

To adults, this doesn't matter, as no TV show is going to change their beliefs. But to boys handy with their trusty DVR, they learn (from the mother of kid Louie), "the whole thing is a bunch of malarkey."

In fairness, the script was boring. The proverbial nun in habit shows up berating the kids about the death of Jesus; the Crucifixion is trivialized; a creepy doctor shows up describing what actually happened; a traumatized kid gets freaked out and knocks down a large crucifix, etc. In other words, most of what is portrayed is without meaning, except for the end where we learn what a crock Christianity is.

As for Jesus, He is described by the doubting mother as "a really, really nice guy who lived a long time ago and told everyone to love each other." He must have been *really* nice if she said it twice. And Louis C.K. must be *really* obsessed with

Catholicism because he can't give it up.

If this show had any value whatsoever, it showed with stunning accuracy exactly how Hollywood sees Christianity.

SELECTIVE OUTRAGE OVER WOMEN'S ORDINATION

Every now and then the media go into a spasm about one or another Catholic teaching they object to, and their latest outrage has been fixated on women's ordination. They do not object that Orthodox Jews do not ordain women. They do not object that Islam has no role for female clergy. They only get upset when the Catholic Church doesn't do what they demand. This not only goes to show how phony they are, it proves how they delight in taking another swipe at Catholicism.

We like Jack Cafferty at CNN, but does he really have the guts to slam Orthodox Jews or Islam over this issue? And if he does, why didn't he include them in his commentary on the August 31 "Situation Room?" Even better, why didn't Jack nail Jews and Muslims and give Catholics a pass?

The *New York Times* has also editorialized on the subject, singling out Catholicism. TV stations have polled their viewers asking them what they think. And to think that these same people can say with a straight face that they really believe in diversity—it's just too much to bear.

America is awash in religions, and the great thing about it is that we don't force them to adopt the same strictures. Sadly, there are those who do believe in one-size-fits all, and if they had it in their power, they would do what comes natural

to them—they would impose their secular will on all religions.

Finally, if the critics are right that the Catholic Church oppresses women because it does not permit women priests, then it should be dying and the mainline Protestant religions should be spiking. Yet the evidence shows that just the reverse is true. Guess liberals can't get anything right these days.

IS SONIA CATHOLIC?

When John Roberts was picked to be the fourth Catholic on the U.S. Supreme Court, Catholic bashers went nuts. Ditto for when Samuel Alito was nominated to be the fifth Catholic.

Yet they were silent when Sonia Sotomayor was chosen to be the sixth Catholic. Is that because she was considered reliably liberal, and therefore not really Catholic? It certainly appears that way.

Why else would Michael Moore tell CNN's Anderson Cooper on September 13 that "We've got five of the nine justices of the Supreme Court"?

See, even liberals don't regard Catholic liberals to be Catholic. Telling.